

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MILAN 00185 311555Z
ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MILAN 0185

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, ELAB, PINR, EFIN, IT
SUBJECT: CATHOLIC LABOR LEADER SEES COMMUNIST SETBACK IN ANDREOTTI
ACCEPTANCE OF "SCALA MOBILE" CONTINUATION

1. GOVERNMENT'S APPARENT RETREAT FROM MODIFICATION OF SCALA
BOBILE IN THE FACE OF UNION INTRANSIGENCE IS DESCRIBED BY A
CATHOLIC LABOR LEADER AS A COMMUNIST SETBACK IN THAT THE
PCI (OR CGIL) WAS SO PATENTLY NOT RPT NOT THE FORCE THAT
CAUSED THE GOVERNMENT TO YIELD. GIOVANNI BIANCHI, PRESIDENT OF
ACLI IN LOMBARDY, TOLD LABOR OFFICER JAN 28 OF ELECTION AMONG
MANY UNIONISTS WHO HAD FEARED - RIGHT UP TO ANNOUNCEMENT
JANUARY 27 - THAT SCALA MOBILE WAS CERTAIN TO BE CURTAILED
IN IMPORTANT WAYS. IN PREPARING THE RANK AND FILE, PLANT
STEWARDS HAD BEEN POINTING OUT THAT PEOPLE ON PAYROLLS HAD
ALWAYS BEEN THE FIRST TO BE HURT UNDER INFLATIONARY CONDITIONS
AND THAT, IN TODAY'S ITALIAN ECONOMY, REALISM FORCED ONE TO ADMIT
THAT MANAGEMENT HAD THE UPPER HAND. ANDREOTTI'S DECISION TO LEAVE
"SCALA MOBILE" VIRTUALLY INTACT CAME AS A SURPRISE TOO GOOD
TO BE TRUE TO TRADE UNIONISTS, SAID BIANCHI.

2. THE PCI'S LOSS, ACCORDING TO BIANCHI, LAY IN THE FACT,
CLEAR TO ALL, THAT LABOR'S VICTORY CAME WITHOUT ASSISTANCE
FROM THE COMMUNISTS. THE PCI HAD BEEN ON THE DEFENSIVE FROM
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PAGE 02 MILAN 00185 311555Z

THE BEGINNING ON THE ISSUE BUT THAT WAS UNDERSTOOD BY MANY
UNIONISTS AS RECOGNITION OF THE INEVITABLE. TO HAVE THE UIL
BRING IT OFF (SECONDED IN THE LATTER STAGES BY THE CISL), AND
WITH SO LITTLE APPARENT DIFFICULTY, PLACED THE CGIL IN THE
LIGHT OF TURNING AWAY FROM A FIGHT THAT ONLY REQUIRED STEAD-
FASTNESS IN ORDER TO BE WON. BIANCHI FEELS RANK AND FILE
DISENCHANTMENT WITH CGIL/PCI WILL TAKE A LONG TIME TO REPAIR.

3. COMMENT: BIANCHI HAS FELT FOR SOME TIME THAT COMMUNIST STRENGTH PEAKED ON JUNE 20 AND IS OF THE VIEW THAT ULTIMATE COMMUNIST CONTROL OF ITALY IS PRECLUDED BY THE COUNTRY'S CATHOLIC TRADITIONS. WHILE THERE IS SOME REASON TO QUESTION HIS JUDGMENT ON THESE POINTS, HE IS AN EXPERIENCED TRADE UNIONIST AND POLITICAL OBSERVER AND HIS SOUNDING OF WORKERS IN LOMBARDY SHOULD NOT BE DISMISSED LIGHTLY.FINA

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